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NEWS RELEASE

CONSUMERS WARNED OF SCAMS ASKING FOR PERSONAL DATA

Agency advises consumers to hang up on suspicious callers

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 16, 2008) – The Kentucky Office of Insurance (KOI) has received reports of several scams and is warning consumers to take extra precautions to protect financial information.

Consumer advocates, police departments and other agencies across the country are warning about a variety of scams coming from a Bismarck, N.D., telephone number - 701-221-2212.

A woman in Louisville told an investigator from KOI's Consumer Protection and Education Division that she took a call from that number earlier this week. The caller, who identified himself as Sid Johnson, said Medicare was making some changes to its plan and he needed her bank account information to ensure that her Social Security check was properly deposited.

In an effort to prove the call was valid, the man said his Medicare ID # was MD10956J.

The Louisville woman said the caller already had some information about her but was missing some key pieces, such as her age. She did not give him any information, hung up and called KOI.

Other scams associated with this number have included the promise of a rebate from the Internal Revenue Service or some other refund or check that can only be received by direct deposit.

Consumers should never give financial information over the phone, particularly if they did not initiate the call, said John Burkholder, KOI acting executive director.

Another scam report came from the Mt. Vernon police department. Several senior citizens in the area reported receiving an automated message that the consumer's auto insurance was expiring and must be renewed by pressing "1." When the consumer followed the directions, the next message asked for personal information. This call originated from 702-528-1131, a number in Las Vegas.

"If a call makes you suspicious or uncomfortable, hang up," said Burkholder. "Government agencies, insurance companies and legitimate businesses would not ask consumers for information using these methods."

The Office of Insurance is an agency of the Department of Public Protection in the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet.